

The Atlantic | The More We Know

The More We Know

THE DAILY DISH | JAN 17, 2011 | DAILY DISH

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Rich Lowry [cites the following](#) in exonerating the far right from any influence on Jared Loughner's disturbed mind:

He became intrigued by antigovernment conspiracy theories, including that the Sept. 11 attacks were perpetrated by the government and that the country's central banking system was enslaving its citizens. His anger would well up at the sight of President George W. Bush, or in discussing what he considered to be the nefarious designs of government.

I hate to point this out, but this doesn't seem to buttress Rich's case. 9/11 Truthers are as ubiquitous on the far right as the far left, where government conspiracy theories thrive. But to a great extent, only the far right is obsessed with the central banking system.

Notice also a shift in the goal-posts. Like Chris Caldwell, Lowry is now pretending that almost all of those who raised the issue of the political climate in Arizona in the wake of an assassination of a congresswoman - a completely logical and legitimate line of inquiry - did not state that this was a hit-job on the part of some Tea Party functionary. In fact, this general early discussion was concerned that crazy people like Loughner could latch on to violent rhetoric that sane people could more easily handle. Going back to my [live-blogging](#), responding to a reader who diagnosed schizophrenia, I wrote:

I have no expertise in this at all, but my impression of his writings and web presence does indeed suggest to me that some mental illness is probably a key part of this. But this does not exonerate violent or excessive rhetoric from the far right or far left: it's precisely the disturbed who can seize on those kinds of statements and act on them. The danger of violent rhetoric, especially involving gun violence, is its interaction with the disturbed. That was Pelosi's message last year.

Note that this concern is *premised* on the notion that Loughner is mentally ill: that's what makes him particularly dangerous in that kind of rhetorically extreme climate. Note that I also raised the specter of possible far left influence as well (and took pains to present evidence that he was a lefty). So Lowry's argument, it seems to me, is with an almost entirely straw man. But even as the details emerged, I noted some strands that, as I said, gave me pause before dismissing this as entirely apolitical. The main themes that leapt out at me were those about the Fed and the currency, staples of far right paranoia. And the more we find out, the more those [themes seem to resonate](#):

Betterment

YOU WORK
HARD FOR
YOUR MONEY.
YOU DESERVE TO
MAKE THE
MOST OF IT.

RETHINK WHAT
YOUR MONEY
CAN DO.

Invest with Confidence



The officer, Dana Mattocks, read the letter aloud, detailing a litany of troubled and disruptive behavior, including the recent posting of an unsettling video titled “Pima Community College School Genocide/Scam Free Education Broken United States Constitution.”

A few days later, during a meeting with a school administrator, Mr. Loughner said that he had paid for his courses illegally because, “*I did not pay with gold and silver*” a standard position among right-wing extremist groups.

It was not just his appearance the pale shaved head and eyebrows that unnerved them. It was also the aggressive, often sexist things that he said, including asserting that *women should not be allowed to hold positions of power or authority.*

My italics. My point here is not that Loughner was a far right ideologue. It is that he was a paranoid, mentally ill, gun-obsessed loner who had picked up shards of far right ideology - on currency, the constitution, gender roles - that need to be recognized for what they are. It's muddled up in an addled mind and diseased soul into something unique. Ron Paul bears no more direct responsibility for this madman than Sarah Palin does. But that Loughner was affected in some small part by far right conspiracy theories seems indisputable at this point. And the massive insistence on the right that politics and political culture tells us *nothing* about this man's mind is not borne out by the evidence we have so far.



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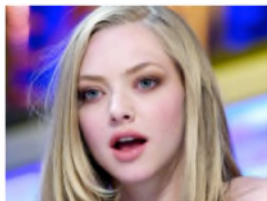
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Jon Lovett wonders if political commentary has become theater criticism.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

2006-2011 archives for **THE DAILY DISH**, featuring Andrew Sullivan

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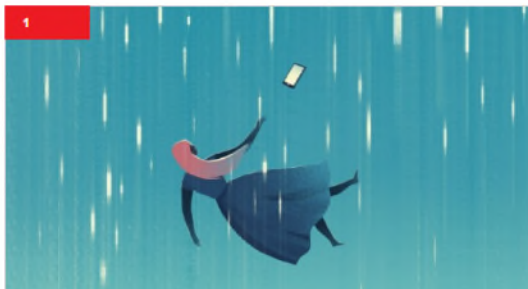
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Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?

JEAN M. TWENGE

One day last summer, around noon, I called Athena, a 13-year-old who lives in Houston, Texas. She answered her phone—she's had an iPhone since she was 11—sounding as if she'd just woken up. We chatted about her favorite songs and TV shows, and I asked her what she likes to do with her friends. “We go to the mall,” she said. “Do your parents drop you off?” I asked, recalling my own middle-school



year-old who lives in Houston, Texas. She answered her door. She smiled if only to look like she was yawning as if she'd just woken up. We chatted about her favorite songs and TV shows, and I asked her what she likes to do with her friends. "We go to the mall," she said. "Do your parents drop you off?" I asked, recalling my own middle-school days, in the 1980s, when I'd enjoy a few parent-free hours shopping with my friends. "No—I go with my family," she

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How America Lost Its Mind

KURT ANDERSEN

When did America become untethered from reality?

I first noticed our national lurch toward fantasy in 2004, after President George W. Bush's political mastermind, Karl Rove, came up with the remarkable phrase *reality-based community*. People in "the reality-based community," he told a reporter, "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality ... That's not the way the world really works anymore." A year later, *The Colbert Report* introduced the "truthiness" segment, a parody of reality-based journalism.

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Is the World Slouching Toward a Grave Systemic Crisis?

PHILIP ZELIKOW

On August 5, Philip Zelikow delivered the following keynote address at the annual meeting of the Aspen Strategy Group, a discussion forum for experts and government practitioners. Zelikow, who is currently the White Burkett Miller Professor of History at the University of Virginia, has served at all levels of American government, and for administrations of both parties—including roles at the White House, State Department, and Pentagon. He was also the executive director of the 9/11 Commission. In this speech he reflects on the much-discussed

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Why Does Trump Still Refuse to Criticize Putin?

DAVID A. GRAHAM

President Trump is most comfortable when he's on the verbal offensive. He loves a good war of words, whether his target is a foreign adversary, a foreign ally, a Republican rival, or Rosie O'Donnell. According to a *New York Times* tally, Trump has attacked 351 separate people, places, and things on Twitter alone since July 2015.

The president has demonstrated that tendency this week, with his *escalating, improvised* threats against North Korea.

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No Country for Colin Kaepernick

VANN R. NEWKIRK II

As a person, Colin Kaepernick is an injured San Francisco



No Country for Colin Kaepernick

VANN R. NEWKIRK II

A year ago, Colin Kaepernick—as an injured San Francisco 49ers backup quarterback during an exhibition game—began his practice of sitting during the pregame rendition of the national anthem. “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color,” he said of his protest. Through the season, even as he regained the starting gig for 11 games, Kaepernick continued his demonstration.

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Trump Is 'Locked and Loaded' in a Nuclear Game of Chicken

KRISHNADEV CALAMUR

President Trump this week has gone from [saying](#) the U.S. will respond to North Korean threats with “fire and fury like the world has never seen” to [clarifying](#) those words were perhaps not “tough enough,” and to spelling out Friday, in case there were doubts, that the U.S. military was “locked and loaded” to counter any threat.

Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

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How to Deal With North Korea

MARK BOWDEN

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Thirty minutes. That’s about how long it would take a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launched from North Korea to reach Los Angeles. With the powers in Pyongyang working doggedly toward making this possible—building an ICBM and shrinking a nuke to fit on it—analysts now predict that Kim Jong Un will have the capability before Donald Trump completes one four-year

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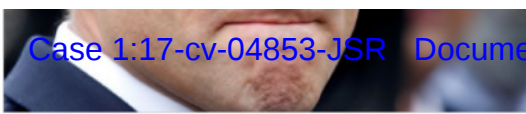


Emmanuel Macron: Monsieur Unpopular

YASMEEN SERHAN

Emmanuel Macron has said that he wants to govern like the Roman god Jupiter, staying above the fray of everyday government issues. But less than three months into the French president’s time in office, his poll numbers are proving just how mortal he is. U.K.-based pollster YouGov [reported](#) a seven-point drop in the young leader’s approval rating, which fell from 43 to 36 percent over the month of July. French pollster Ifop [observed](#) a similar decline over the same period, noting that: “Apart from Jacques Chirac in July

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reported a seven-point drop in the young leader's approval ratings, which fell from 45 to 38 percent over the month of July. French pollster Ifop observed a similar decline over the same period, noting that: "Apart from Jacques Chirac in July

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The Average Guy Who Spent 6,003 Hours Trying to Be a Professional Golfer

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

Dan McLaughlin reckons he's sat down to compose the farewell post to the Dan Plan a hundred times. "I just don't know what to write," he says.

Sitting in his spartan home in Portland, Oregon, McLaughlin is self-effacing and soft-spoken. He recently launched an [artisanal soft-drink venture](#). Discussing the Dan Plan is like reaching back into another life: Seven-plus years ago, aged 30 and unsure even of which hand to grip a

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A Question for Google's CEO

CONOR FRIEDERSDORF

When CEO Sundar Pichai addressed a controversial [memo](#) about diversity that circulated inside Google, culminating in the termination of its author, James Damore, he began by [telling the company's 72,053 employees](#) that "we strongly support the right of Googlers to express themselves, and much of what was in that memo is fair to debate, regardless of whether a vast majority of Googlers disagree with it."

"However," he added, "portions of the memo violate our

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'Holy Shit, We're in a Cult'

JACLYN SKURIE AND NICOLAS POLLOCK

EnlightenNext was an organization that promised spiritual awakening. Instead, it turned into a complicated, often-sinister community.

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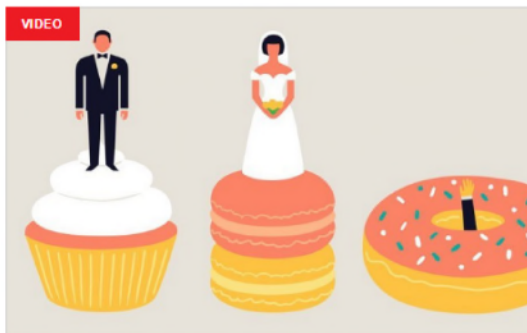
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